

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR GLORIA MOLINA

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For the past three years, the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has redirected resources to decrease the average time children are in the foster care system. According to DCFS, this decrease, in addition to other budgeted under-expenditures, has resulted in a projected net county cost savings in this year's budget. In light of this savings, DCFS plans to redirect a portion of the current year cost savings to enhance the success of its three permanency-focused programs: Concurrent Planning Redesign; the Permanency Partners Program, and; Team Decision Making. Furthermore, DCFS had planned, as part of its proposed Fiscal Year 2006-2007 budget, to recommend more funding to its programs directed to improve child safety.

However, in light of the tragic deaths of Sarah C. and other children under the supervision of DCFS, as well as the dangerous conditions of children living with their families on Skid Row, DCFS' child safety programs must be immediately improved. These child safety programs will serve vital needs in DCFS to protect children. Therefore, a portion of current year cost savings should be redirected to child safety

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programs involving oversight over relative caregivers, improving emergency response and improving DCFS' performance.

Placing children in the homes of their relatives when they cannot live with their parents is an important focus of DCFS. DCFS places approximately thirty percent of the 38,546 children receiving child welfare services in the homes of relatives. Unlike Foster Family Agencies and Group Homes, however, relative homes undergo only very limited oversight. To address this issue, DCFS should blend and enhance existing DCFS units to create a unit to provide independent oversight over relative caregivers. This unit should also ensure that relative caregivers receive funding for children placed in their care in a timely manner and ensure that DCFS receives the federal reimbursement it is forfeiting now due to lack of timely review of relative homes.

Further, DCFS should reduce emergency response caseloads, in keeping with the national standard, and ensure that performance issues are addressed in a timely manner.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors directs the Department of Children and Family Services to redirect any remaining cost savings, beyond that which it plans to redirect to permanency programs, to immediately enhance its programs directly related to improved child safety. DCFS should also provide specific performance measures to demonstrate that outcomes are being met in these child safety programs.

EC/ld